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Interview with Sarah Spears (Collins) Copeland, b. 1901 (FA 141)

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TAPE INTERVIEW

Tape # 1 of 2

Interviewer: Holly Travis Address: 204 Uncle John's Lane, Glasgow, Ky.

Interviewee: Sarah Copeland Address: 212 Dove Park, Versailles, Ky.

Interviewee: Ruth Collins Address: 212 Dove Park, Versailles, Ky.
(write additional names on back of sheet)

Place of Interview: 204 Uncle John's Lane Date: September 29, 1989

Equipment Used: General Electric Conference Recorder & dynamic microphone

Tape Brand: TDK Speed: normal

Cassette Brand: IEC II/ TYPE II high 60 or 90 minute? SA60

Amount of tape used: Side A: 3/4 Side B: all

Brief description of contents:

This tape mostly deals with my grandmother and her growing up in Eastern Kentucky.

Comments:

On the first side of this tape, my Aunt Ruth doesn't say much at first, but later on becomes a significant part of the tape, so that is why her name is included.

Turn no.	Outline of contents--verbatim material in quotes
	(short opening announcement)
008	Now my grandfather had been way on up the creek where he lived to visit his sisters and he had to pass a graveyard that was around the hill. And he said his horse, he felt like it sunk down on the back, so something could get on and said then well it was alright so it went right on. Rode right on. And then after they got passed the graveyard the horse did the same thing again like its a goin a kinda sit down you know. And then let something off, off the horse, so there from there on he went on home. And now he told that and he wasn't, he said he would swear that this happened.
034	Interviewer: <u>Something was on his horse in the graveyard?</u> Yeah, yeah. Something had gone on behind him and drove a good distance around that graveyard. And that was a public highway. And he said that then the first thing he knowed the horse kinda made a move like it was going to sit down, then what ever behind got off, why then the horse went right on no troubles. That was a ghost story. But now he wasn't on of those people who was a scardy cat as you call 'em.

Turn no.	Outline of contents---verbatim material in quotes
053	<p><u>Interviewer: You said there were a lot of witch stories up there in the mountains?</u></p> <p>Yeah, witches. We were scared of witches.</p> <p>[My Aunt Ruth clarifies that it was more gypsies than witches]</p> <p>One time I was goin to school and we had to go long ways to where school was. So we had to go kinda around the hill, the road was built around the hill, on the hill. And we got down off the hill road, well here was a big flat place of the hill, and there was gypsies. We were so scared of them. They had their horses and their wagons. And they would camp. And so we'd been told about them. They didn't bother us. We went ride on apass and they stay there two or three days. We were scared. And they would got to the people's houses and ask for food, and go in their gardens and help themselves, also orchards.</p>
084	<p><u>Interviewer: Why were you scared of them?</u></p> <p>We were taught they might do something, or else take us away. Put us in the wagons and take us away. We wasn't, we were scared you know, we didn't care about goin to school, but still we went. Well, they stayed there two of three days. Then another time....they would go to people's houses and ask for food, but people's so scared of them. They would give them sometimes some food. They would steal.</p>
105	<p><u>Interviewer: Was this when you were young?</u></p> <p>I was a school girl.</p> <p><u>Interviewer: So where was this?</u></p> <p>That was on what they called Buffalo Creek in Floyd County. That's where I was raised. And I did go back there this summer past where I was raised.</p> <p><u>Interviewer: Was it the same house?</u></p> <p>No. The house burnt down years ago. I guess, what year....I don't remember now. It burnt down. My brother was living in the house and the house was mine because when my.....</p> <p>[My Aunt Ruth and Grandmother try to figure out which house]</p>
119	<p>The log house I was born and raised in was at the back of this house, so they took a notion to build a new house and they put it right in front of that house, and they used that log house for storage and whatever. They used it for a meat, their meat when they killed the hog meat. They used that one</p>

Turn no.	Outline of contents--verbatim material in quotes
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	part of it and to store stuff in, in the fall especially.
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When my father and mother died we divided the home place in 1939. And we all made deeds to each other. And then when the men folks, none of us girls went, we were all sick, so our men went. And the way they divided it was to put they walked it. And there was a hundred acres of the land and they was hill land, on top of the hill, and then plum to the creek, what they called Buffalo Creek. Well, they stepped it off and guessed at it, their feet you know, and let that be one person's and did the same thing, they posted that, and they went on until they divided it into seven parts. And of course there was a hundred acres and it run with the creek, you know, and plum top of the hill.

154

Then when....my brother was there when my daddy died at the home place with him. And so he just stayed on and then a of course, the other children didn't want to go back there and live, but one brother, the oldest brother, he was there. He said he went to milk one evening, he had some small children, his wife had died and he had some small children, but he had to take care of 'em. And he said he went out to milk the cows and said all he knowed that could set the house a fire, them days the mantle piece here (she points to the mantle thats over my head) would have a scarf on it. You've seen them I guess ain't yah? Nice, pretty lacey cloth. He said only thing he know could have happen, the front door could have come open and blowed that scarf down and its, till it struck to the.....

172

Interviewer: So the house caught on fire?

That's the way the house got caught fire. He said he found and that's all he knowed. And it went up and he was out there milking the cows and he looked around and the house was all burning. Well, of course, then when they divided the land I got the home place. Your mother's daddy went in my place and then all the other brothers and all the son-in-laws went. And they put numbers in a hat and each one would draw the numbers. And Mary's daddy drawed the number, the home place. That was numbered and he drew the number out of the hat. So that made me have the house. But still at that time it was already burnt down. But there was a big orchard on it and everything. It had all kinds of fruit. And then several years, 1944, we all began to sell the property because none of us was aiming to go back there and live. So

Turn no.	Outline of contents--verbatim material in quotes
	<p>my nephew bought. I sold to my nephew, my place. And then joinin' me then was my brother Frank, and he sold to him. And it ended up that he had four or five parts of that land. And then a...I don't know who had the other parts. Well, but anyway, in 1944, that's when I sold mine to my nephew. In '49 the government then was a takin' all the property, buying it, and then put the Jenny Wiley(), Dewey Lake(). Well, anyway, there they put in a dam down on what they called mouth of John's Creek. Well, then our Buffalo water run out onto John's Creek. So, then the government put in this lake and people's go there and for recreation, you know, they go there for camping, boat rides, and people's got boats on it, and that's a true story now. The home place is underwater now. The homeplace, I couldn't recognize where it was at. The water was from hill to hill you know, and trees has growed up wherever the water didn't wash it out. We went there in '80, Margaret and Harold. And I couldn't recognize where home was because it growed up so. I couldn't tell where it was at.</p>
229	<p><u>Interviewer: Did you get depressed?</u></p> <p>Yes it did. It still in my mind. And then the graveyard, our daddy's mother back there, there was a graveyard. So when the government....they was buried at another graveyard way on down below where it was.</p> <p><u>Interviewer: So they moved all the bodies before they filled it up with water?</u></p> <p>Oh, yeah, well yeah. They moved these bodies down, way down where the water wouldn't get over 'em. And they moved them up on that hill where my house was, so water don't get up there. And it's growed up now till I don't guess you could find the graves. And that's depressing.</p> <p><u>Interviewer: Do you remember any stories or tales from when you were little?</u></p> <p>No. Anyway we all slept in one room at that time when was all small. And they would talk until they went to sleep--everybody.</p>
250	<p><u>Interviewer: Did you tell stories to each other?</u></p> <p>Oh yeah. That was one thing that we would. They'd tell us what they had seen years before, you know, and how they growed up, and all that. And then when they growed up there was the Indian that was driven out of that country by the white people, because they was settled in there and they was soon driven out.</p>

Turn no.	Outline of contents--verbatim material in quotes
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	<p>Interviewer: But you were saying earlier about the medicines you got from the Indians?</p>
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	<p>Oh yeah. The people, like our parents, they followed up with these Indian medications that they knowed how to treat. Say sores, how to make sags to put on a sores. And then also there was also like certain weeds that grewed on the hillside like ginseng, and yellow root, and two or three other kind. Well, there was spice wood and sassafras. And in the winter time, in say after Christmas time, that when we kinda dug the roots from the sassafras because the sap had all left the top of the tree to the root. Then you got the full strength of that sassafras. Well, that was a tea, instead of the tea we have today, you know, how everybody used that. And still there was spice wood; we used when we cooked certain foods. We bake something in the oven we put that in 'er and that would give that food some flavor.</p>
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283

	<p>Interviewer: You said the sassafras helped heart conditions?</p>
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	<p>No. That was ginseng. That was a heart medicine. If you had something wrong, you know, and they would go, everybody did every summer, they'd go and get that ginseng, and save that and tie it on a string and hang it where they could get ahold of it. Then they just go and get the little piece or two of it and chew it and swallow that juice. And that was a heart medication them days. And then the yellow root was a medicine for sores. If you had a sore to come on you, anywhere about ya, they would get that yellow root and they would boil that down to it real thick like. And they'd use that then to spread on a sore, and that would heel that sore.</p>
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	<p>Catnip tea, yeah. That's when the babies, when there was new babies and the momma had no milk yet, catnip tea, that grewed around everywhere, all around, and thay go and get that and boil that and sweeten that a little bit and they'd give that to the babies with a spoon, until the mommy had milk in her breast. The baby'd go to sleep, and just a little bit after you would use that. You can buy that in the drugstores now.</p>
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308

	<p>Oh yeah. When the babies was pretty bad to cry, they made a surgar tip for 'em. Took a white cloth and put some surgar in that cloth and tie it up good and just small enough so you could put it in that baby's mouth. And it would suck on 'at and satisfy it and he would go to sleep.</p>
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Turn no.	Outline of contents--verbatim material in quotes
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And then another thing they would do, they had cradles. My mother told me, told us, about my older sister. At that time they had a dog, a shepherd dog, and they had one of these cradles. They'd put the baby in the cradle. If the baby cried that dog would go there and put one foot over here, one over here [she's indicating the bottom of the rocker] and rock that baby in that cradle.

[My Aunt Ruth helps my grandmother remember]

Oh yeah. If they were afraid of say, germs of such and such, like maybe typhoid fever, them days they did have it, and there was asafetida. Now that, I've seen it but I can't explain it exactly how to tell you about. And they would put that in a little cloth and tie that with a string and put that around your neck. And you could just go everywhere that sick person was and that there you didn't get, catch what that person had. And that is true now.

335 My mother was with me. Ruth's daddy was gone. Estel's daddy was gone. and so here I, just me and the kids. Well my mother come and stayed with me, and my brother. And someone in the family, my husband's people, had died with typhoid fever. Well, of course, money was pretty scarce with people who didn't have no jobs, like me you know, I took care of the kids. Anyway, they asked me would I wash his, he died of typhoid fever, would I wash his clothes. And I hesitated a minute. And my mother said it won't hurt a thing, said, we'd get some asafetida and put it around your neck and you can wash these clothes outdoors, because you keep your wash water out there in a tub and then you wash you clothes all outside the house and then you would have no chance of catchin typhoid from washing them clothes.

353 Interviewer: This asafetida, was it a root?

Yeah, that's what it was. Put you in the mind of what they called a gensang root. And you can buy that in the drugstore now. And that was one of the remedies they used in them kind of cases.

357 SIDE A END.

SIDE B BEGIN.

477 [another small announcement]

I was born in Floyd County, Kentucky up in the county. Prestonsburg is my home town. (she blows her nose) And I don't know how many miles it was

Turn no.	Outline of contents--verbatim material in quotes
	<p>from where we lived, but that was our home, the county seat of Floyd County. I was born'd in 1901. I am right now 88, will be 89 in this January the nineth. My name is Sarah Spears Copeland now. I married a Burtchal next. My first husband got killed in a car. And my second husband, which was Burtchal, and he died with a heart condition about three years after we was married. Then in a short time I married Mr. Copeland, James Alfred Copeland from Tennessee. My parents name was Kenace P. Spears. My mother was Luney Dile Spears. And my daddy died before my mother did. He died in 1927.</p>
525	<p><u>Interviewer: Do you remember where your family was from originally?</u></p> <p>[Ruth Collins speaks]</p> <p>The history we have so far traces the family back to France, to the period of the ^{Huguenots} hugenots. And they started scattering from there. They went to Ireland, England, Scotland, but they have yet found when they came to the United States. And we don't know where they settled first and how come they came to be in Floyd County. The history goes back to the 1600's so far.</p> <p>[Sarah Copeland speaks again]</p> <p>And my father owned a hundred acres of land.(microphone noise) A lot of it was hillside land, had timber on it and then.....Our living was farming and we growed everything we eat, except our flour and our coffee and our surger and salt. And then when summertime come, everything was planted and we took care of it and we dried our apples, we sheared our sheep and spun that wool and made our clothes from that ...that was yarn.</p>
568	<p><u>Interviewer: So you went to school to the fourth grade?</u></p> <p>Fourth grade. And our school only went as far as the eighth grade. So when you got that far you then had to go as far as Prestonsburg to the high school. Was a lot of our friends who did do that. But I married quite young and I left there, went to the coal fields and stayed in 'em the rest of my life, until the last few years.</p> <p><u>Interviewer: Tell me about the candy your father would always give you for Christmas.</u></p> <p>Oh yeah. Christmas was a....we took Christmas big like we do today. My father would always go to where he could, well he'd go to Prestonsburg, where he could get all kind a candy and oranges. That's where we got oranges and bananas for Christmas time. So, our stores never had that kind of stuff.</p>

Turn no.	Outline of contents--verbatim material in quotes
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591

And me father always got what you called saw log candy. It's great big, big as your arm. Was peppermint candy. Well, then, the first year I married, I never told my husband that I always got saw log candy for Christmas. So he done the shopping that day and thought he was going to surprise me, which he did. He brought in everything good, you know. So first thing you knowed I was cryin'. Why was I cryin'? And I said I always got a sawed off stick of candy for Christmas, and here I didn't. So he did go next day and got me a sawed off stick of candy. And from there on every Christmas I got, he got me candy, sawed off stick of candy. And he got killed in 1925. We had three children. And then I married this Burtchal, and we had one child, and he died in 'bout three years.

Interviewer: How did he die?

With a heart condition. He had a leaky valve, what they called it. And he was a mainline track man in the mines. And they sawed back this here railroad steal, it 'as heavy, not that big, but was heavy. And they called it the mainline and that was bigger steal than what was up at the other entrance. And these men would have to drag that wherever they wanted to put it down, like they was makin' a road for the motors to roll on. And so all that they could ever figure out about it 'as he strained muscles in his heart doin' that kind a work. But I never got any compensation from that.

730

[Ruth Collins says they did pay for the funeral however]

Yes they paid, I just didn't get none. Well, then, a short time after he died I met my third husband. Then we had three children. And all together I raised seven, had and raised seven children. And that was in coal fields. And then my last husband died in 1955. He was 61 years old.

[Ruth brings up the topic about Sarah coming to mountains alone]

Well, I was left at my brother's house until my husband and my brother, and one of his brothers--there's five of 'em--started out to hunt work. And one 'em had knowed wherre that....Pond Creek was where there's coal fields. And he had a brother-in-law live there he said, which his name was Griffy. And he said well let's start then, and they all took out the next day and they walked a way up John's Creek across the hill, across another hill and walked way over into Williamson, West Virginia, there was a train, railroad. So they said, the conductor was standing there waitin' for people to get on,

Turn no.	Outline of contents--verbatim material in quotes
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759

they walked up and talked to him a few minutes and said 'we're new here and we are huntin' work. Do you know where we can find any work.' 'Oh yeah', said, 'this train will take you right where you a need to go. In fact, right on this train is a superintendent of a coal mine, which his name was Dan Hogans.' And they got on that train and went to where, well, I never did do know how many miles it was, but wasn't too awful far. They got off and that man was on that train. Dan Hogans said come go with me. And he took 'em right in the office of the store. That's where his main office was, back of the store. Said, 'come with me', and he took 'em right in there and said, 'what can you do?' And one of 'em said, 'I can do anything.' Well, he said, 'I'll leave that up to the bank boss,' and said, 'I will a... you all are hard, you can work and you've got a job.' And said, 'what do you need?' And they said, 'well, we want a board.' And one of 'em spoke up and said this fellow here's got a brother-in-law and sister-in-law that is keepin' boarders, we know where, not too far up above the store. And they got a boarding house they runnin', eight room house they keep boarders.

787

And said well we'll go up there. And the boss of the company said, 'well, o.k. And you do whatever the bank boss says. You come out to work and he'll tell you what to do.' Well, some of 'em didn't go in the mines, but some of 'em did. Ruth's daddy went in and his brother went in. And I think this Giffy man, he didn't like to go in mines and he got a outside job.

808

Well now there was.....we come there in 1916. We get married the 12th of September in 1916. And then I stayed at home with my brother's wife and until the 22nd day of October. And by that time my husband had worked out pay day. So he sent me a nice coat and a nice hat and a nice pair of shoes in the mail, and money to come to him on. Now that was from September to the 22nd of October I come to him. He met me then at Williamson, West Virginia, which was a short distance from where the mines was. And then at this boarding house, this lady said to me, 'you and Marion,' said, 'could stay in my side of the house where my husband and I live.' They had one room. Here we all could stay in the other room. And then the boarders was all down here in these other houses, you see.

[Ruth asks Sarah to tell what happened to her hat]

Oh, yeah. Then, the train never had air-conditioning on 'em. And

Turn no.	Outline of contents--verbatim material in quotes
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829

between Williamson and Fort Gay was sixteen tunnels that the train had to go under the hill. Well, in hot weather, you know, the train so hot, I had a, what they called a white crusher hat, it was a pretty hat, and kinda up on one side a little. And it was really black, nearly, by the time I got off that train. Well, he said, 'Oh, your face is black too.' And I said, 'I can't help it, he had the windas up. And he said, 'well you go in there.'

[Ruth Collins speaks]

When the train would go through the tunnel all that smoke went right through into the coaches and that's how come her.....The train would run by coal engine--steam engine. So all that just come right back into where the passengers where and just set on 'em. Your hair was black. It was hot. So that was the only way to get air into the train and so all that just came back and settled on the passengers. And when she got off there, why she was black. They had to take her back into a wash room and get her washed up before he could take her on home.

838

[Sarah Copeland speaks again]

He said your face is terribly black, and I said well I can't help it. And showed me where to go in the rest room and wash myself. I guess I looked like the coal people did. But anyway, we stayed there at that boarding house from in October till in November. And Marion's brother's mother had two, another young boy and three girls at home and so this here brother, of my husband, was gettin'--got a house and moved them to where we was at, this coal fields. And then they got a house. They got two houses and kept boarders. His brother worked in the mines. And so the family then run the boardin' house down there. They had all the rooms a full, there were plenty of boarders. And then her husband then, Piley, come to her then and got a job then, till in November. And by that time my husband had a half-brother that lived on Kanawha River up above Charleston. And he would just have us go home with him, but he was a boarder--he boarded. And he wanted us to go and so he could stay with us. Well we went home with him. Went on home with him and he went into the mines. He got a job the next day after he got there. Well he took us to his, where he was a boardin', and these people's names was Thompsons. And they's real nice people just like I was used to, you know. And so we stayed there until, well when he went to

Turn. no.	Outline of contents--verbatim material in quotes
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875	the mines to get work there. The next day after we got there, he got a job in the mines and then the superintendent said to go to the office. And then they hired him and also said, 'now what do you need?' Said, 'I need a house.' And said, 'well, just go in the store and pick what you need and then we'll take it out of the payroll every month as much as you want to give, until you get that paid for, like that.' So we stayed there until after Christmas. And then took a notion to move closer to work 'cause he had to walk a good long way to his work. And he asked the company, then, for a change in house. And they said, 'well, where do you want one?' And he told 'em where it was at, and they let us move. We went to their house and stayed till in March, let see....February. His brother and mother and all them gang come to where's at then, on Kanawha River, that's above
898	Charleston. And there we all stayed at one house. We had a house and, well, we managed to for everybody to live there until we knowed what everybody wanted to do. And so Ruth's daddy, which was Marion Collins, he took a notion he didn't want to stay in the mines. He didn't like the mines there. And he told a man runnin' a loggin' job back in the hills---cut timber, and rolled that off down here, down here was a saw mill. And then all that wood was worked up for supplies to use in the mines. They had to set timbers in that, you know, in the mine. And then sometimes they needed lumber about building so and so. But that was a loggin' job and in the mines was union people, and this here loggin' job was not union.
914	Well, when this boss sent him to back in the hills with the rest of the crew, there was about twelve of 'em, back in there to cut these logs out and get 'em out to the mill. They did that a few days and he worked 'em 'bout, till about 6 o'clock, which made longer than the union worked 'em then. They got to thinkin' about that over and Marion did, and said, 'you know the mines is union and this here work we're doin' right here is not.' And said, 'look here how long we are a havin' to work for a days shift.' Marion said, 'stay with me. We'll do something about that.' When about 4 o'clock come, Marion said, 'boys, lets go down to the mill and tell the boss it's quit time.' When they got down there they said, the boss said, Collins, what's a matter? It's not quit time. Why you all commin' in for?' Said, 'it's quit time,' said, 'the mines is quit.' Said, 'well this is not

Turn no.	Outline of contents--verbatim material in quotes
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929	<p>the mines. Said, 'every bit of this work we're doin right here goes to: the mine, that timber. All that goes right to that union mines.' And the boss then, he wasn't a likin' that a bit. So next morning they come back out to work and the same thing done again. They done the same thing when 'bout 4 o'clock come. They put in a days work and Marion said lets go down to the mill. And the boss said, 'Collins, what is a matter again?' Said, 'we want union pay. We are a goin' to quit when the mines quit.' Well, they argued about it. The boss, he said. 'Collins, how 'bout you workin' tomorrow in the mill, here at the mill?' Said, 'o.k., if you need me that 'el be alright. But he done got these other boys, timbermen, trained what to do. And he went at where they sawed their lumber and worked up that lumber for the mines. And when 4 o'clock come, Marion shut that mill down. 'Now what's the matter Collins.' Said, 'we still goin' to work...this is mine....this is union.' He had 'round and 'round that boss. And...but he organized that there job.</p>
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951	<p>But, anyway, they done just what Marion told 'em. And, of course, the boss worked them right on, you know. And sent them back in the hills. But, still, Marion stayed at the mill and done what the boss told him down there, you know, to do. But, how we lived, well I've got the picture of the mill. And we're close to where the mill--job was. And we stayed there, let see... Now..and his brother moved his mother and 'em there and they stayed a while. And we all began to get dissatisfied. And the men said lets go back to Pond Creek. Well, anyway, we done paid off our furniture, what we bought, and we had to crate that furniture. You had to crate you stove, build boxes to put around in, for that express, that train. We'd put it on that train---is an express. You had to box everything, crate it. And that was put on 'at train right at the store. That at to be hauled in a wagon down there. So he got a wagon to haul that stuff down 'er to that train station.</p>
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968	<p>And we all got on that train and come back towe had to change trains in Charleston. Bramwell, West Virginia were we got on the train, and to Charleston, changed trains and then got on. And then we come in to Williamson, West Virginia, and from there on to up to McViegh, Kentucky. And so we all did 'at. Then they went right on to the company store and told that man that they needed work. And he made no arguement about it, and said, 'well, what can we do for ya? What do you need?' 'We need a house.'</p>
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Turn no. Outline of contents--verbatim material in quotes

977 We need this and we need that. And said, 'ok. Go in the store and get what you need.' But we had done paid for what we had already bought, you know. And we needed a few more things you know. And then Andrew told him what they needed. They need a whole lot of things. Said, 'go in the store and get what you need.' And then it could be put on the payroll. Paid for this by the month. Anyway, when payday come, for the company to hold out so much money out of every payday. And that's the way they paid that off, you know. So well, go and hunt your house, and we all did.

[Ruth Collins says the houses were constructed by the mine company]

In 1910 them houses was built. And they was every one painted red. And even all the little houses outside was painted red. It was pretty 'ng.

993 [Ruth Collins speaks]

The rooms were good sized. And they all were at least four rooms, some of them were six rooms. And most of them were double houses. That is what we call duplexes now, well that's what the houses were then. There would be two families to a house. But you had your own individual partition.

[Sarah Copeland speaks]

997 And there's partition on the porch. You would have one side of this house and somebody else have the other side, if you didn't want the whole house.

[Ruth Collins again]

And you had a stove for your kitchen. Cooking, you had to carry water in....

[Sarah again]

We had pumps right close, right close.

[Ruth]

(You) had to carry the water to the house. There was one bathroom. Then, some companies provided washhouses for men to take their baths away from the house.

1004 END TAPE 1